

## Time matters. Or how to extract diachronic patterning from field survey data and reconstruct rural history in the lower Potenza valley (central Italy)

Dimitri Van Limbergen, Devi Taelman & Frank Vermeulen (Ghent University)

The translation from recorded artefact scatters to meaningful diachronic settlement patterns is one of the main struggles in archaeological field survey. Core issues include the stratigraphy-less nature of surface assemblages, the differing representation and visibility of certain time periods and the preponderance of non-diagnostic artefacts. This analytical process is thus inevitably a subjective enterprise; that is, one that needs to allow for a number of interpretative biases and necessarily entails a number of assumptions. This should not take away the scientific value of our interpretations, but rather encourage us to refine our methodological reasonings.

With this paper, we would like to offer a series of contemplations on how to effectively work around some of the aforementioned issues. We hereby focus in particular on the use of diachronic data distribution methods, the assessment of workable thresholds for characterising rural site occupation through time and the impact of survey strategy on the interpretation of recorded artefact scatters.

The dataset for this exercise comes from the Potenza Valley Survey Project, a multidisciplinary research project in central Adriatic Italy by Ghent University that aims at gaining insight into the human-environment relationships along the river Potenza from the Final Bronze Age to the Early Medieval period (c. 1000 BCE to 1000 CE).